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Tropical Fruit Improvement in Florida

The Sub-Tropical Experiment Station at Homestead, Florida, is internationally famous for its efforts in improving tropical fruits since it was established in 1930. An important aspect of the work at Homestead has been the introduction of fruit cultivars from abroad. Among them are the lychee cultivars 'Sweet Cliff' from China, 'Bengal' from India and 'Mauritius' from South Africa, as well as the 'Mysore' raspberry from India.

A second contribution at Homestead has been the selection of open-pollinated seedlings. Among these are the 'Dade' white sapote, 'Prolific' sapodilla, 'Florida Sweet' Barbados cherry, 'Gold Star' carambola, 'Redland guava, 'Ruehle' avocado and 'Wolf' loquat. Selections of the black sapote, canistel, carissa, governor's plum, longan, mango and sugar apple are also being tested.

A third phase of fruit improvement at Homestead has involved scientific breeding. Attempts have been made to breed new varieties of avocado, mango and guava. Because their flowers are so small and so few plants have been obtained, the breeding of avocado and mango have so far not been successful. However, the breeding of guava has been rather productive. Promising guava selections resulting from crosses of 'Webber' with 'Supreme,' and of 'Ruby' with 'Supreme' are now being tested.

In additions to the fruit improvement work it supports, the Homestead Station has a valuable fruit arboretum of 150 species for teaching and research.